

COMMON HEALTH QUESTIONS RELATED TO MONOCHLORAMINE

28) Can my doctor tell if my health problems are caused by **monochloramine** or any other disinfectant in drinking water?

A doctor would have difficulty making a direct link between a health problem and **monochloramine** or any other disinfectant in drinking water.

- People are exposed to many chemicals and other irritants in their daily lives and their sensitivity to these agents varies.
- EPA's drinking water regulations limit the use of chloramines to levels where no adverse health effects are anticipated.
- EPA's regulatory standard for chloramines in drinking water provides a wide margin of safety¹ to offset any uncertainties in risk assessments.

EPA believes that drinking water disinfected with monochloramine that meets regulatory standards poses no known or anticipated adverse health problems.

- Isolated cases of health problems thought to be related to drinking water have been reported and were investigated by CDC.²
- Trichloramine, a chemical that may be formed in swimming pools³, has been linked to skin irritation and breathing problems.
- CDC's investigation² of reports of monochloramine-related breathing problems related to drinking water was unable to draw any conclusions about monochloramine and health effects.

Contact your doctor if you think you have a health problem related to drinking water use.

- It is important for your doctor to know where and how you believe you were exposed to chloramines (e.g., via drinking water or a swimming pool).⁴
- Health problems are typically highly diverse in origin, making it difficult for doctors to specify exact causes.
- Your doctor should discuss health problems that he/she believes may be related to chloramines in drinking water with the local health department.

Additional Supporting Information:

1. For additional information regarding how uncertainty factors (also known as safety factors) are applied to risk assessments to provide a wide margin of safety see:

<http://epa.gov/risk/dose-response.htm>.

2. CDC and EPA conducted a preliminary investigation of reports of monochloramine-related health problems associated with drinking water. The investigation consisted of a questionnaire filled out by complainants. The information collected can be used to help design future epidemiologic studies.

CDC's trip report can be found at:

http://healthvermont.gov/enviro/water/documents/CDC_Chloramines_report_011608.pdf.

3. Improper pool maintenance can often lead to trichloramine formation: Some examples include: www.cdc.gov/niosh/hhe/reports/pdfs/2007-0163-3062.pdf and www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/wk/mm5636.pdf.

4.. See question 1 for a discussion of the different types of chloramines.